

EUGENE WEEKLY'S 2012 GUIDE TO WINE

# *uncorked*

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# Battling Birds

The endless war of wings and wine in Willamette Valley BY DANTE ZUÑIGA-WEST

Above us, avian overlords command the sky. They are capable of traveling great distances across open sea, hovering motionless in midair and swooping down to seize prey between sharp talons. Sure, some of them seem harmless, but who really knows what they're doing when they're soaring overhead, hiding in the trees like government assassins or peering into your bedroom window like spies?

For centuries, these fowl things were the emissaries of kings and queens, tasked with carrying sensitive information capable of toppling governments and ruining lives. Centuries before that, evidence suggests that they may have hunted our ancestors.

Birds should never be trusted, particularly because they sometimes stand in the way between man and wine — an intolerable offense. One could even go so far as to speculate that this aggression is personal — a preemptive strike of sorts, aimed at keeping man in his place, on the ground and without solace.

Ask almost any wino and he will tell you that he imbibes his medicine in an attempt to feel at peace. It's ironic, really, because what symbol does mankind primarily associate with peace? A dove. This is a deep-seeded sort of thing.

Most people who own and work vineyards would agree. "They're pests," says local vineyard worker James Shelly, who has plied his trade all around the world. "They can make it so you don't make any money at all off a harvest."

Robins, starlings, mockingbirds, finches — during the fall, when grapes hang heavy on the vine, these creatures become the enemy of wine. They will fly miles from their roosts to feed, and once they've targeted a food source it is incredibly difficult to get them to leave. The sweeter or earlier the grape, the more the birds crave it. So vineyard hands have been forced to retaliate, in the name of wine.

"If you have a treeline anywhere near your vineyard, you've got bird problems," says Dustin Lotspeich, manager of Pheasant Hill Vineyard in Talent. "Strategically deploying bird netting is one method we use."

You can intuit from Lotspeich's language just how serious this war has become. And, as is the case with most warfare, he who holds the psychological advantage often wins.

One of the most effective weapons vineyard folks uti-



OWNER DEAN INMAN AND TUCKER DOG OF MASON RIDGE VINEYARDS PREPARE THE PROPANE CANON, ONE OF SEVERAL BIRD DETERRENTS

lize against the feathered invaders is acoustic repellent. Digital recordings of birds under stress are set on a timer and played in the vicinity of the grapes as well as near surrounding treelines, all in an effort to dissuade the birds. This tactic seems solid. I mean, think about it: If you heard the sounds of human beings screaming bloody murder outside your new favorite restaurant, you probably wouldn't go near that place to get dinner.

There are times, however, when the flocks are too massive, the enemy too strong. In these cases vineyards are forced to employ even more powerful weapons against the birds.

Enter the bird bangers. These nonlethal explosive repellants are intended to haze the birds, similar to the way a concussion grenade exploding in your kitchen might compel you to stop eating and leave immediately. Some of these bird bangers can get pretty serious.

"Yeah, when it gets real bad you might have to use a propane canon," Lotspeich says.

This canon does not actually fire a projectile, but rather uses propane gas to cause a detonation that closely mimics a shotgun.

Though this may seem a bit extreme, when you hear horror stories about flocks of birds cleaning out more than a ton of fruit in one season, you might reconsider — that's a lot of wine to miss out on.

On large vineyards in other countries, the warfare is bloodier. "I've seen plenty of birds get smoked on vineyards in New Zealand during harvest season," Shelly says.

The picture Shelly paints of his time on New Zealand vineyards is apocalyptic in scale. Often workers are employed for the sole purpose of combating birds. He says men armed with shotguns and riding ATVs were constantly on patrol, blasting and hazing the birds with impunity. It would seem the war between wings and spirits has indeed become one of attrition.

It's illegal to shoot songbirds in Oregon, so it is unlikely we will see any serious ordnance lobbed into the sky after these armies of winged thieves. But the next time you sit down to enjoy that glass of Oregon pinot, remember those who have fought for your freedom. Freedom isn't free — raise your glass. ❖

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LAURA AND MICAH BODNER AT THEIR PLEASANT HILL WINERY

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# Less is More

*Bodner Wine Co. will make no wine before there's room* BY PATRICK JAMES

**M**icah and Laura Bodner's winery could fit in your garage, if your garage had a little more head space for punching down a 1,000-liter open-top tank. To facilitate the dynamic process of opening a winery, the Bodners first needed leverage. So they removed the ceiling in a barn and squeezed in equipment wherever it would fit.

The barrels and tanks in the Bodner's barn occupy the same small compartment; the destemmer (no crusher), presses, bins and stainless-steel vessels are stored in the corner opposite the chemistry lab; the office also serves as a cellar and cold-fermentation room. And all of this makes up Bodner Wine Co., located in Pleasant Hill behind Laura's parents' house.

In a highly competitive industry where quantity, price and name-recognition can often dictate the market quality of popular labels, microwineries (or nanowineries) with limited production capability have the freedom — and incur all the risks — of making atypical wines. The Bodners are limited in production, growing slowly to ensure quality in their wine as well as in their investment. In other words, they can't afford to produce more wine than they already do.

Currently the Bodners have released only one bottling of their wine, 60 cases of Willamette Valley Pinot Noir from 2010 — a tough year to start by industry standards, as the cool weather forced grape-growers to pick earlier or later than was ideal.

But the Bodners have no vineyards of their own. They purchase grapes from small Roncalli and Herberson vineyards and then bring them to their tiny winery instead of processing them at an estate. Just to house a facility for alcohol production — and then to legally sell the alcohol — the Bodners had to jump through myriad county, state and federally mandated hoops to bond and establish their winery.

"Then we started acquiring equipment as cheaply as possible," Micah says. The pump for moving and racking wine off the lees was purchased used from Noble Estate Winery; the barrels for aging were recycled, scraped and custom toasted by Re:Wine in Eugene to impart a one-third "new" French oak character in their wine. Also, before the Bodners were able to acquire a newer, gentler bladder press, the first vintage was loaned to them by Bodner the elder. Most important, however, was gathering information.

Micah Bodner grew up out Lost Creek on a 56-acre family farm, five acres of which were planted with native grapes

(Glenora, Aurora, Lakemont) and used for home fermentation. But a few years ago, after deciding to pursue commercial winemaking — and while Micah was finishing graduate chemistry studies in Baltimore — the Bodners began to research large-scale vinification techniques from online UC-Davis curricula. After returning to Oregon and sorting out the fiscal and physical potentialities for production, the Bodners traveled to Napa to glean what *not* to do when making wine.

In true P-Hill fashion, the Bodners camped out and hiked between wineries during the day. "People in huge SUVs were looking at us like, 'What are those crazy people doing?'" Laura recalls. Underground investigation, tasting wines and then trying to sneak back into the production facilities for a peek at the works were all activities that helped the couple realize they wanted to make the opposite of "over-oaked, over-ripe, flabby, fruity wine that so many people enjoy," Micah explains. "We make the wine we like, and we have the freedom to do it."

And what the Bodners like is a delicate, aromatic, light-bodied Burgundian-style wine with an emphasis on terroir (the characteristic of a particular geography and climate). Drinking it is like tasting dirt and sweat (in a good way) and inhaling the fruits of labor.

To own and manage a business is a series of full-time jobs, and with Laura pregnant and selling real estate, and Micah researching medical chemistry at UO, time is at a premium. And the Bodners are farmers as well.

Nearby Zephyr Ridge Vineyard, just down the road from the winery, is planted with 250 Riesling vines that are a quarter-century old. In 2010, that particular Riesling, the Bodner's first vintage, proved unusable. After a year of work — tending, pruning and spraying organic sulfur and milk on the plants and soil — the Bodners were able to nurse to health and harvest from the vines nearly a ton of 5- to 10-percent botrytized grapes (grapes infected with a benevolent fungus named Noble rot). This hard work resulted in a freshly bottled German-style Riesling — off-dry apple, mineral backbone, low alcohol — to the tune of 30 cases.

"Our first year goal was to make good pinot," Micah says, "then slowly branch out with other varietals and quantities. We want to control our production to make wine that is different from anywhere else." ❖

*Bodner Winery is located at 85151 Ridgeway Rd. in Pleasant Hill; for further information about Bodner Wine Co., visit [bodnerwinecompany.com](http://bodnerwinecompany.com)*

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MORGAN BROADLEY OF  
BROADLEY VINEYARDS

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# Romancing the Vines

*Broadley Vineyards prove Monroe can produce a perfect pinot* BY LANCE SPARKS

The year was 1981, not really auspicious. The place was Monroe, Ore., population about half a thousand, a village, really, approximately halfway between Eugene and Corvallis.

Experts said it shouldn't be done, *couldn't* be done. Nope, the viticulture expert/consultant scolded Craig and Claudia Broadley, explaining that they wouldn't be able to ripen grapes on this particular slope, this particular hillside in, of all places, Monroe, all the way down at the south end of the Willamette Valley.

Sure, some folks — David Lett at Eyrie, the Eraths, the Ponzis and others — were planting such “cool country” varietals as pinot noir, chardonnay and pinot gris, mostly in the hills at the upper end of the valley, around McMinnville, and getting really good wines.

But not here, not on this northeast-facing slope; it should be facing south, basking in what little sun reaches the soggy, sodden south valley, even though this particular stretch had the reputation of being in the “banana belt.”

But Craig, then 35, and Claudia, 34, had spent ten years searching for just the right hillside, and Craig had carefully studied the slopes of France's Burgundy region, where the world's best pinot noir was grown and vinified. Craig also enrolled in enology and viticulture classes at UC-Davis, and he was convinced that this was the place.

Besides, the Broadleys were deep in the throes of several powerful passions: first, for each other, and they still make each other laugh a lot, still take care of each other and their growing family; second, they were firmly gripped by the back-to-the-land movement launched in the late '60s and '70s; and, lastly, they had become dedicated

pinot-heads, for which there's no known cure, though the treatment — quaffs of good pinot noir — is not so horrible.

Too, they had just about reached the end of another passion — for books. In the early 1980s, Craig and Claudia were the principals in The Subterranean Company, wholesale booksellers. They mainly fronted for City Lights Books, owned and operated the by the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, publishing such luminaries of the era as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, the best of the Beats. Craig and Claudia kept their day jobs, kept moving books — from Monroe, a place where the Beats would be distinctly out of place, even now.

The Broadleys were bold, young city-slickers — urbane, sophisticated foodies hailing from Los Angeles, via Sacramento and, later, San Francisco, then, as now, home to some of the best dining on the West Coast: music, art, fashion, a vortex of the counterculture. Monroe was then, as now, a rather sleepy little burg (current pop. 680) surrounded by grass farms, its hillsides growing Christmas trees. The main restaurant was the Chat 'n Chew.

Of course, there were vineyards not too far south, along Territorial Road: Lee Smith had Forgeron in Elmira (it's now LaVelle and thriving); Doyle Hinman had started Hinman Vineyards (now Hinman/Silvan Ridge, also thriving) in 1979 just south of Veneta. And slightly north, in tiny Alpine, Dan and Christine Jepsen were trying to make Alpine Vineyards (est. 1980) a success, with cabernet sauvignon as their primary grape and wine. Not many folks were figuring that the south Willamette Valley promised a future of gold in wines.

Despite contrary advice, Craig and Claudia Broadley bought the hilly 15 acres just upslope from “downtown”

Monroe. They needed help from Craig's parents, Leighton and Marcile Broadley, nice folks who owned a large company manufacturing glass electrodes in Santa Ana, Calif. With the 'rents' help, C&C began planting their “impossible” vineyard in 1982. Their 12-year-old son, Morgan, labored alongside these slickers-turned-farmers: “That first summer I got to be the water boy,” Morgan says now, recalling the labor of hand-watering each skinny vine.

In those first years, Craig and Claudia had to live in Eugene — Craig: “We couldn't get financing for a home on a vineyard” — and Morgan did his schooling in the city, eventually graduating from South Eugene High School. They made their first harvest in '86, not a great year for Oregon but good for the Broadleys; they sold all their wine and got ready for the 1987 vintage.

Oregon winemakers spent most of 1987 apologizing for over-hyping the vintage, but the Broadleys made good wine, and persisted. In 1996, the widely read and respected *Wine Spectator* listed the Broadley 1994 Claudia's Choice Pinot Noir at #24 in their Top 100 Wines of the World, giving that bottling 94 points on their 100-point scale. And one French expert awarded the wine 97 points, a signal of extraordinary excellence. Success has followed success since then.

Now, 30 years later, “water boy” Morgan, 42, has stretched out to six feet, four inches, and has taken a much stronger role in Broadley Vineyards and wines. In 1996, he married the dynamic Jessica Waldren; lately, some of the Broadleys' best wines carry Jessica's name or the names of their two daughters, Olivia, 11, and Savanna, 9.

Morgan has learned winemaking mainly “from my pappy,” though he's taken enology classes at OSU and

UC-Davis. But a family trip to Burgundy in 2007 was a “phenomenal experience.” Morgan had the chance to meet and talk wine with some of the region’s best viniculturalists, and changes followed: “After 2007, we toned down the [use of new] oak” to make wines in which the “fruit is more obvious” and the wines ready to drink much sooner. A recent special issue of the *Wine Spectator* rated two Broadley 2009 bottlings at 91 points, excellent scores.

Recent vintages have not been easy. Morgan remembers “rain at harvest” for 2007, but some experts still rate that vintage as one of Broadley’s best; 2008 “was a really late year,” saved by a cool, dry fall; 2009 was “hot at harvest,” producing “bigger, chunkier” wines, but also wines that tasters — and raters — loved.

The 2010 harvest, coming at the end of what locals dubbed “the summer that never was,” developed slowly, becoming “very scary” and very late, the “latest year we had.” The grapes hung on the vines, slowly ripening while harvesting crews waited anxiously for good weather.

They had to delay the harvest so long that flocks of migratory robins and starlings, so thick they looked like clouds, descended on the vineyards and feasted on the ripe fruit: “We lost 13 tons of grapes to the birds,” Morgan recalls (see p. 2). But the harvest yielded the “best wines we made in the last 10 years,” wines “more promising than the ‘08s.”

Some of the 2010 wines are just coming into the market and are being met with considerable wine buzz. These might be the best ever. Meanwhile, the 2011 wines are resting in their barrels — but tasting very good, very Broadley.

After a brief flirtation with other varietals (e.g., Chardonnay), the Broadleys have specialized in pinot noir, possibly the world’s most challenging grape to grow and wine to make. The Broadley pinot style has become distinctive and recognizable, noted for being firm,



complex, with deep, intensely fresh fruit flavors that run the spectrum from ripe cherries to blackberries, wrapped in a warm cloak of oak. They also show a certain spiciness.

Altogether, Broadley pinots trip across the palate in layers of flavors, usually with a long, lingering finish. The wines also show levels of acidity that makes them

particularly food-friendly; this is also a characteristic of the great pinot noirs from Burgundy.

In 1980, Craig Broadley went looking for what he then called a “tubular taste,” a flavor profile close to what he’d encountered in great red Burgundies, “kinda like a snake going down your throat.” Broadley’s wines now seem to approach that profile, though Craig — and now Morgan — are their own sharpest critics; they never over-hype and are always looking for the next, better, wine.

In recent years, the Broadleys have contracted with other growers to exchange grapes. Most notable in those trades have been the grapes from the frequently honored Shea Estate Vineyard (Broadley 2009 Shea Pinot Noir, WS 91 pts.). They’re also experimenting with other grapes, like Grenache and syrah. When the 2011 bottlings are released, the Broadley 2011 Grenache, we predict, will be a tippler’s favorite.

Claudia and Craig now have a nice, modest house overlooking their vineyard. On a clear day, from their deck at about 600-foot elevation, they can see across the valley as far north as Mt. Hood, then the string of snow-capped Cascades, including Adams and Washington, south to the Three Sisters. Craig insists they can see Eugene (Claudia asks: “We can see to Eugene?” Craig replies: “Well, you can’t see the people waving, but yes.”)

It’s a grand view. Just down the hill, they can also see the home of Morgan, Jessica, Olivia and Savanna. The Broadleys have made quite a home for their vines, their wines and their family.

These days, sleepy, bucolic Monroe is quickly gaining a name as prime country for vines and wines (see p. 6). Vineyards sometimes replace tree farms on the hillsides. Of that new growth, Craig says, “I think it’s great.”

“The more wineries, the better,” Morgan adds. ❖

*Broadley Vineyards is at 25158 Orchard Tract Rd. in Monroe; for more information, visit [broadleyvineyards.com](http://broadleyvineyards.com) or call 541-847-5934.*



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THERESE AND BRIAN SCHAFER  
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# The Sun Also Rises

A crop of new wineries grows in sleepy little Monroe BY LANCE SPARKS

The Broadleys' home, a dark, beveled-cedar single-story, sits near the top of the hill above their vineyards. From the front deck, the south Willamette Valley is revealed to the east — lush, green with farms, fields and stands of oaks and firs. On clear days, snow-capped peaks of the Cascades gleam in the sunlight, from Mt. Hood in the north to the Three Sisters in the south.

In front of the house, the **BROADLEY VINEYARDS** are just beginning to flush with new growth; especially enticing is the set of north-facing vines that produce the grapes for Claudia's Choice, Broadleys' premier bottling, their prize-winner.

The Broadleys pioneered this area, displacing Christmas-tree farms and goat ranching (Morgan Broadley has brought back goats) and proving that wine grapes, *vinis vinifera*, could thrive here and yield world-class wines. Thirty years of successful growing blazed a trail to Monroe, and others have followed.

Now, just downslope from the Broadley homestead and southerly around the hill along Orchard Tract Road, a handsome wrought-iron gate, painted a shade of celadon, marks the entry to **WHYBRA VINEYARDS**. Nothing here invites visitors, especially not the slinking German shepherd who tracks the car just outside the driver's door. At the end of the steeply sloping crushed-basalt driveway sits a trailer under trees, a few sheds and outbuildings nearby.

Christi Alvarez — in broad-brimmed hat and blue rubber gloves — stays here with her two watchful hounds. She actually lives in Sun River and comes over to carefully tend her 11.5 acres of pinot noir. The vineyard was planted

in 1992, but wines wearing the Whybra label didn't appear until 2007. Whybra 2009 Pinot Noir is not widely distributed but can be found at the Longbranch Saloon, just across the highway from the Broadley tasting room in Monroe.

Downslope, around the bend and up another crude driveway, we find the pole building that Brian and Therese Schafer converted to an apartment for themselves and a winery for their newly established **TEBRI VINEYARDS**. They've just released their 2009 pinot noir, a palpable hit.

Before he retired, Brian had been fire chief in Lake Tahoe but concluded "firefighting at age 60 is not a good idea." How good an idea was it to start a vineyard?

"What the hell was I thinking? A vineyard? Gimme a break." No breaks; Brian built the house by hand; Therese turned it into a comfortable, attractive home.

In the attached winery the Schafers keep a camp tent set up for when the (fully grown) kids and grandkids come to visit. The Schafers are a strikingly attractive couple, fit and lively, who "always loved wines."

When Brian's retirement approached, they started shopping for land, someplace sweet, someplace they could explore "life after fire": "The further south we got, the more we liked it." That included the wines; then they tasted Broadley Claudia's Choice.

Now, Brian says, "Our goal is to make pinot noir that stands up not only to the best wine in the state but is also one of the best in Monroe." Holding hands, Brian and Therese amble down a grassy lane to introduce us to their neighbors.

Just across the field from TeBri, Phil and Nancy McCullum, both retired educators, have launched **SWEET EARTH VINEYARDS**. They bought their five acres

in 2005, with 3.5 acres of pinot noir and pinot gris that had already been planted in 2003. They bottled their first vintage in 2009 and have been winning prizes since: Sweet Earth 2010 Estate Pinot Noir won Gold and a Grand Award of Excellence at this year's Oregon Wine Awards; the SE 2011 Rosé of Pinot Noir took Gold at Newport's Wine and Food Fest. Their tasting room is ready to open on weekends during the coming season, Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Further downslope, making a couple of curves along Coon Road, we roll into **LONE OAK VINEYARDS** to meet Dave and Yvonne Miller. Their house faces south, looking across four acres first planted in 1999, now growing pinot noir, pinot gris, syrah and even one row of Sangiovese. Yvonne retired from Elmira High School; Dave's retired, a "machinist by trade," but still working.

Dave says they started the vineyard "to supplement our health insurance." He opens the doors to their two-car garage, revealing "maybe the world's smallest winery" — fermenting tanks, barrels and all in a space that could hold two compacts. Lone Oak 2008 Pinot Noir Reserve, however, is seriously good wine, top-shelf quality but accessible price, and the next vintages should be exciting.

More vineyards are being planted around Monroe, even in this wobbly economy. The Broadleys' success, the successes had by Steve Girard at Benton-Lane Vineyards just a couple miles south of Monroe, even the successes of the area's newbies, all these have viniculturalists and their agents scouting the warm slopes of the eastern edge of the Coast Range foothills.

There's no doubt anymore: This is wine country — damn good wine, too. ☼

# Spit or Swallow?

Free weekly wine tastings within walking distance BY ANDY VALENTINE

Word knows you don't need to be a wino to get a taste for grapes. It's delicious, inhibition-loosening and, under the right conditions, extremely refreshing. The weather's been beautiful lately, and while snatching up a bottle of Three-Buck-Chuck, dragging a couch into the middle of your lawn, cranking some UB40 and getting sloshed might sound like refreshment enough, there's also a city full of invigorating wine — and easy, fun ways to select what's right for you — just beyond the driveway.

By the time you're done sipping on a wine with craft in its haunches, you won't know whether or not you want to uphold etiquette and spit it out, or say "mazel tov" and guzzle it down.

"We'll buy wines based on knowing a good vintage," says Randy Stokes, manager and buyer at **Sundance Wine Cellars** (2441 Hilyard St.; 687-9463). "As soon as we see them in the book we jump on them without even needing to taste them."

Fortunately Stokes really knows his wines, so tasting isn't always a must, but for those of us who require a little more assurance before we buy, his informed selections are available for sampling seven days a week. Sundance also hosts free, formal wine tastings from 5-7 pm every Friday and Saturday. If you're new to wine tasting, this is a great place to start — low smarm, lotsa charm and goblets of good wine to be tried.

But what about those other five days? Is there a reason we can't drop by somewhere during the workweek and plow through a few samples? No problemo, hard-working citizens; Eugene has a plethora of locations and small businesses offering free wine tastings during the week as well as on Sundays.

**Supreme Bean, 16 Tons' Southtowne location** (2864 Willamette St.; 485-2700), hosts wine tastings every Thursday between 5-7 pm — which is perfect timing if you're finally stepping out of your hellishly dark, cramped office and into the freedom and warmth of these spring evenings. And if you find that you're getting a taste for tasting, **Jiffy Market** (3443 Hilyard St.; 342-4552) is another spot in that neck of the woods featuring multiple wines for sampling seven days a week.

We can't always rely entirely upon our tongues, though. If you're like me, then you're not as vino-savvy as you could be, and let's face it — there's a spit-bucket full of knowledge going to waste unless you talk to the right people. Thankfully, there are folks like Steve Baker at **Authentica Wines** (766 Park St.; 485-0336), a regular ball of knowledgeable and personable wine-lovery. If you're in there for tastings, he's your man — and he's in the business for the fun.

Beyond these particular spots there's a virtual whirlwind of wineries and shops sporting wine on display: **The Broadway** (17 Oakway Cntr.; 685-0790), **New Frontier Market** (1101 W. 8th Ave.; 345-7401), **Market of Choice** (multiple locations; marketofchoice.com), **LaVelle Vineyards** (296 E. 5th Ave.; 338-9875) and **Capella** (2489 Willamette St.; 345-1014), to name but a few, all offering either samples or a scheduled tasting each week. With this much elderberry faderade to choose from, there's no reason you shouldn't end up at home with a woozy sparkle in your eyes and a tannin suction cup in both cheeks. Actually I guess that part's up to you:

What'll it be, Eugene? Shall we spit or swallow? ❖



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## LIVE MUSIC SCHEDULE:

Saturday, May 26th  
Barefoot Leroy  
2 to 5 pm

Sunday, May 27th  
Mudpuppy  
2 to 5 pm

Monday, May 28th  
APROPOS  
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